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GUIDE FOR COMPLETING FORM NO. 45: FITNESS REPORT

PREFACE

This handbook is for the guidance of supervisors and administrative officials in completing Fitness Reports. General policy and procedural guidance is provided [redacted] Fitness Report, and on the Fitness Report forms.

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1. WHAT IS A FITNESS REPORT?

- a. A Fitness Report is a form for recording the opinion of a supervisor about the work performance, suitability for employment, and potential of a subordinate. The report is only one element in the general evaluations which are constantly being made of employees. Reports which are prepared carefully will be extremely valuable for consideration in connection with the development of career plans and the review of personnel actions. On the other hand, reports which do not fairly reflect the individual's performance and potential may lead to personnel actions which are detrimental to the individual, the supervisor, and to the Organization.
- b. Fitness Reports will be of primary interest to two groups. Employees, being rated or evaluated, are rightfully interested because of their natural desire to know where they stand with their supervisor(s). It is the firm policy of this Organization to support this right of the individual. It is clear that management requires information on personnel performance and potential. The report is designed so that both of these interests are met through differentiating between the evaluation of job performance — the subject of particular concern to the employee and his immediate supervisor, and the evaluation of potential — the subject of particular interest to secondary levels of supervision and to career service elements. Opinions, and therefore reports, concerning an individual's performance or potential can and will differ legitimately. All that is required is that each supervisor give his honest opinion after carefully observing his subordinate in action. Over a period of time the series of reports prepared by several different supervisors will provide a progressively more accurate evaluation of the individual concerned.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE NEW FITNESS REPORT

The initial evaluation system in the Organization was the Personnel Evaluation Report (PER) introduced in 1952. It was superseded by the first Fitness Report, introduced on an experimental basis in November 1954, which was designed to provide a report more suitable for selection purposes. With the introduction of the Fitness Report, plans were laid for continuing study of the evaluation program. The study was largely concerned with finding out what supervisors at all levels wanted in a fitness report. This approach recognizes the controversial nature of fitness reporting, there being almost as many opinions about it as there are people. What a majority wanted and how the majority were using the Fitness Report became the basis for the current change. Specific steps in the development were as follows:

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- a. Analysis of the replies of supervisors to the questionnaire circulated about the November 1954 Fitness Report.
- b. Analysis of the content of completed Fitness Reports and statistical studies pertaining thereto.
- c. Interviews with Operating Officials, administrative officers, supervisors, and personnel officers throughout the Organization concerning this subject.
- d. Development of a revised Fitness Report, reflecting the findings that had been arrived at, in order to provide a basis for further discussions.
- e. Submission of this proposed revision to a number of Operating Officials, administrative officers, supervisors, and personnel officers, from all components, in a series of meetings for pro and con discussions concerning all aspects of evaluation reporting. Each group spent much time in analyzing and discussing the proposed report, suggested changes, and the policies and procedures which should govern its use.
- f. The draft of the Fitness Report revision was further, and quite markedly, altered as a result of these meetings and presented to a task force of the Career Council especially appointed for this purpose.
- g. The second revision was then submitted to the operating and administrative officials to be sure the substance of their criticisms and recommendations had been incorporated.
- h. When general agreement was indicated, the proposed Fitness Report revision was recommended to the Career Council by the task force. The Council adopted the revised Fitness Report.

3. THE TWO PARTS OF THE FITNESS REPORT FORM

Job performance and potential were the two points emphasized during discussions with makers and users of Fitness Reports. The revisions reflect this emphasis. The emphasis on job performance is consistent with the individual's right to know how he is doing; the emphasis on potential is consistent with the Organization's right to obtain information permitting effective and fair planning. The two uses of the Fitness Report are differentiated and put into separate parts of the form ((Part I) Performance and (Part II) Potential) to permit the application of the different policies appropriate to the purposes in each case. The Fitness Report is not designed to provide a numerical rating of an individual. It is Organization policy that no such rating, either numerical or otherwise, be applied to employees as a product of completed Reports.

- a. (Part I) Performance (figure 1) is designed to elicit the supervisor's opinion concerning the on-the-job performance of the individual. It is concerned with the productivity and quality of performance of the employee on the job he is performing. It is Organization policy that *the employee has the right to see this part* after completion by the supervisor. Under the limited circumstances listed below, how-

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ever, the supervisor may elect not to show the report to the employee unless it supports an adverse action:

- (1) When there exists unusual operational circumstances such as those at a small station where the rater and the individual being evaluated are working and living in very close proximity and constant social interchange between them is necessary.
- (2) When, for medical or psychological reasons, it would be ill-advised to show the individual the report;
- (3) When security considerations preclude showing the report;
- (4) When the supervisor and individual being rated are so physically separated that it is impractical to show the report.

When the supervisor elects not to show the report to the individual being rated, for one or more of the above reasons, he shall give the reasons for his action in section B of (Part I) Performance. The individual may subsequently be shown the report by the head of his Career Service upon request, security considerations permitting. Suggestions for the conduct of the discussion or interview which will accompany the showing of the report are given in paragraph 5, below.

- b. (Part II) Potential (figure 2) is designed to provide Operating Officials and personnel officers with an opinion concerning the potential of the employee. Such information is necessary if due consideration is to be given the employee in assignments, promotions, selection for membership in the Career Staff and other actions affecting his status. This part of the report seeks to provide management with the type of information it should have to use and develop personnel. Organization policy prescribes that this part *WILL NOT BE SHOWN* to the individual being rated. The policy of *not* showing Part II of the Fitness Report to the rated individual is *not* to be construed as prohibiting discussions, at appropriate times not related to the Fitness Report, between the supervisor and the rated individual regarding the career potential and work environment characteristics of the rated individual. Such discussions should be encouraged. The supervisor has the right, generally the obligation, to explain his views to the rated individual, and the rated individual has the right to inquire as to his potential and the means available toward improving that potential.

4. GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING THE FITNESS REPORT (PART I) PERFORMANCE

SECTION A. GENERAL

The items of this section should be completed accurately and use should be made of official records, as necessary. Special instructions * for completing or omitting items of this part of the report in the foreign field should be carefully observed.

* Form No. 45a: Field Transmittal - Fitness Report (not attached).

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SECTION B. CERTIFICATION

Item 1. For the Rater: The supervisor rating a subordinate should refer to paragraph 3a, above, for guidance concerning exceptions to the policy of showing Part I of the report to the subordinate.

Subitem A — The last statement of this part of the certification is not to be confused with Item 1. Item 1 will be used to indicate whether the individual being rated was shown the completed Part I of the report. The final statement of subitem A should be checked by the supervisor when circumstances (e.g., physical separation) have prevented discussion, or communication with the employee about his job performance.

Subitem B — "This Date" is the date Part I of the report is signed by the supervisor.

Subitems C and D — Self-explanatory. Note special instructions for use in the foreign field.

Item 2. For the Reviewing Official: See instructions provided in paragraph 8, below.

Subitem A — "This Date" is the date Part I of the report is signed by the Reviewing Official.

Subitems B and C — Self-explanatory. Note special instructions for use in the foreign field.

SECTION C. JOB PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Item 1. Rating on General Performance of Duties

The supervisor's rating of the employee in this section should be based exclusively on his productivity on the job, meaning the quality and quantity of his work performance. It may very well be that he is potentially worth more to the Organization in another capacity or that he is very pleasant to have around or that he is in some ways a distracting influence in the office — *but* he must be rated on how well and how rapidly he accomplishes his assignments. Other factors are reflected later in the report.

Item 1. COMMENTS: Add clarifying comments concerning his performance in getting the work accomplished. The supervisor's opinion of his *productivity* is wanted.

Item 2. Ratings on Performance of Specific Duties

It is rare that two jobs, even those identically classified, are exactly the same in all respects. In this part of the report the supervisor has the opportunity to spell

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out, preferably in the order of their importance, the actual functions of the job being performed by the individual being rated. In Item 1, the supervisor indicated an overall rating for the performance of this individual. In this item he should determine the functions the employee performs, list them, and rate each one separately. For example: Two stenographers are working for the same supervisor. One has the special duty of managing a filing system, the other of serving as office receptionist. At least one function of each of these would be different and the employees would be rated according to the manner in which they perform such functions. Furthermore, supervisors will find that they expect different things from subordinates in terms of such factors as length of service, age, experience, etc. These conditions are reflected in the assignments given individuals and should be reflected in the rating applied in this section. Very careful consideration should be given this section because it is an important basis for evaluation of the employee for future assignments. For the supervisor it will form the main basis of the interview with the employee concerning his performance.

Item 3. Narrative Description of Manner of Job Performance
Do not essentially repeat the opinion expressed in Item 2. Instead, the supervisor should stress the strengths or weaknesses of the employee. In addition, the supervisor may comment here on any extenuating circumstances (family problems, outside distractions, etc.) which affect the productivity of the employee.

SECTION D. SUITABILITY FOR CURRENT JOB IN ORGANIZATION

As opposed to the ratings given the employee in the preceding section of the report, this part is used to evaluate or express the supervisor's opinion of the employee in an overall manner as it applies in his work. For example: An employee may not be highly productive but he may be good for the team; he works well with others; he is useful in many ways not directly associated with productivity or his assignments. Conversely, the employee may be a great producer but his work is done at the expense of teamwork, i.e., he disrupts harmony, does not fully cooperate, etc. In short, sum it up. The question following this section concerning suitability for some other position should be considered and answered regardless of the nature of the previous ratings if the supervisor has a sound recommendation based on the experience and interests of the employee.

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5. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPLOYEE WHEN SHOWING HIM THE FORM

A CENTRAL AND INESCAPABLE ELEMENT OF A SUPERVISOR'S JOB IS TO EVALUATE HIS SUBORDINATES, CONVEY HIS EVALUATION TO THEM, AND HELP THEM DEVELOP AND IMPROVE.

This is a continuous responsibility and is not adequately discharged by the single interview at fitness reporting time. Fitness reporting time, however, does provide a convenient time for a general review of an employee's performance. This discussion is one of the most important parts of the fitness reporting procedure. Like any other interview, the skill with which it is conducted will increase with the care the supervisor takes in planning for it. In looking over (Part I) Performance of the Fitness Report with the employee, the most likely source of discussion will be section C, Item 2 where his performance is noted. It follows, therefore, that in determining the items to be rated in section C, Item 2, the supervisor is providing himself with a basis for the interview. The thought the supervisor puts into completion of this section, the care with which he marshals current illustrations to back up his ratings, and the ingenuity he spends in thinking up specific suggestions for the employee will make a great deal of difference on how the interview goes. If the interview goes badly, morale of the employee suffers. If a supervisor has any doubt about his ability to deal with the interview in a specific instance, he should consult with *his* supervisor.

a. GENERAL SUGGESTION

Having the employee participate in the determination of the elements to be rated in section C, Item 2 is one method of getting the interview off to a good start. Preferably, this should be done in advance of fitness reporting time so that the employee will know what is expected of him and on what duties he is going to be evaluated. Supervisors must be prepared to yield a point if the employee can produce evidence that the supervisor has overlooked. But, supervisors must also be prepared to maintain their judgment when the employee has nothing but a generalized opinion not supported by specifics.

b. SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- (1) Prepare for the interview. Have specific and current illustrations at hand to show how the evaluation was arrived at.
- (2) Be sure the employee understands the purpose of the interview.
- (3) Begin the discussion of how the individual rates with a good point, if at all possible. Try to give at least as much credit as criticism.
- (4) Encourage the employee to talk. Listen to him. Schedule the interview so there is no need to hurry through it. Remember that the attitude the employee develops at this interview will affect both him and the supervisor for some time to come.

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- (5) In discussing weaknesses:
 - (a) Be prepared with current illustrations of them.
 - (b) Be prepared with suggestions for improvement.
 - (c) Avoid those the employee can do nothing about, unless they are important, e. g., those which indicate a need for change in assignment.
 - (d) Keep the discussion oriented around a comparison of the performance of the employee with what is expected of him.
 - (e) Avoid making specific comparison between the employee being rated and others during the discussion, since it may only lead to gossip in the unit and subsequent morale problems.
- (6) Close the interview on a positive note such as encouraging the employee to make suggestions on what he should do during the next rating period or what the supervisor could do to make his job better, or a summary of what the employee and supervisor have talked about.
- (7) Adapt these suggestions to your own personality and manner of dealing with your employees. Interviews in which a supervisor is clearly not behaving naturally are not usually successful.
- (8) Should any question arise concerning (Part II) Potential, the supervisor should state that policy forbids him to show that part to the employee. If the employee continues to press the discussion, he should be referred to the supervisor next in line for further information.

6. GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING THE FITNESS REPORT (PART II) **POTENTIAL**

SECTION E. GENERAL

The items of this section should be completed accurately and use should be made of official records, as necessary. Special instructions for completing or omitting items of this part of the report in the foreign field should be carefully observed.

SECTION F. CERTIFICATION

Item 1. For the Rater: Insert the date Part II of the report is signed in subitem A. Subitems B and C are self-explanatory. Note special instructions for use in the foreign field.

Item 2. For the Reviewing Official: Insert the date Part II of the report is signed in subitem A. Subitems B and C are self-explanatory. Note special instructions for use in the foreign field.

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SECTION G. ESTIMATE OF POTENTIAL

Item 1. Potential to Assume Greater Responsibilities

Consideration should be given to the increased responsibilities that would accrue if the individual is to assume a position in the normal line of progression. In some cases, this means additional responsibilities within the same line of work requiring perhaps only greater self-direction or increased knowledge of the work. In other instances it may involve additional or different functions, such as supervision over others, planning, etc. Discretion must be exercised by the rater in recognizing that a position of "immediate higher responsibility" may not be available. The mere fact of nonexistence, in the foreseeable future, of a position of higher responsibility for the rated individual should not preclude the rater from entering the highest rating, if, in fact, he considers the highest rating a true evaluation of the rated individual's potential.

Item 2. Supervisory Potential

Here the supervisor is asked for the best opinion he can give. For employees who have not been in a supervisory position, the estimate should take into account any aptitude (or lack of it) which may have been shown by the employee. For example: in his giving on-the-job instruction to others; in his getting the cooperation of the clerks or typists; or in his assumption of leadership in tasks assigned to a small group of which he is a member. If the supervisor has had no chance to evaluate such actions on the part of the individual, he will have to rate the employee on his best guess as to how he might respond in a supervisory position, using as a guide the employee's acceptance by others in a group as evidence of personal leadership, and his ability to organize and carry through his own work.

Item 3. Self-explanatory.

Item 4. Comments Concerning Potential

Add here any further remarks or clarification concerning the opinion of the employee's potential.

SECTION H. FUTURE PLANS

Item 1. Training or other Developmental Experience Planned (or Recommended) for the Individual

Include plans for on-the-job training, developmental rotation assignments, formal internal and external

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training and other plans which may be incorporated in career planning.

Item 2. Note other Factors

While on the basis of experience, training, and other factors an individual may have varying degrees of potential, this potential is affected by other circumstances which may permanently or only temporarily condition his potential, such as family illness. Please note such here.

SECTION I. DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUAL

This section requires a very critical analysis on the part of the supervisor. Each factor should be carefully considered. It is best to try to think of concrete examples in each case as the rating is applied. Remember that it is a rare case when an individual does not vary widely in as many factors as these covering his behavior. Approach each factor separately, without relation to others, and apply a rating. This section is a good test of the supervisor's ability to observe his subordinates.

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RATER

Fitness Reports can be no better than the honesty and objectivity of the individual who makes them. They simply represent recorded opinions. Important functions of a supervisor are making such opinions, accurately reporting them to his superiors, and communicating them to his subordinates.

Since Fitness Reports are merely recorded opinion, they are not infallible. Standards of job performance differ, interpretations of words differ, abilities to judge others differ. There is no reason for two people to inevitably agree in reporting about the performance and potential of an individual, nor is there any reason why supervisors cannot change their opinion as they observe the individual longer. Hence, successive reports from the same supervisor may be expected to differ.

What can be expected from a rater under these circumstances? Basically, an honest attempt to record an opinion arrived at as objectively as he knows how. When in doubt about how to rate, make an effort to get more facts, more observations. Of one thing we are certain—attempts on the part of a supervisor to guess what standards *others* will use and to influence action by deliberately rating high, can only result, in the long run, in increased errors in personnel actions and less efficient work on the part of the Organization. Overrating out of a general feeling of kindness is one of the most difficult matters for a rater to control. He should consider the following:

- a. It is no real favor to an employee to overrate him because:
 - (1) Such evaluations often lead to assignments of duties and responsibilities which the individual cannot master.

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- (2) It may very well obscure the fact that additional training for the individual would be desirable.
- (3) It merely tends to put off a supervisory problem which should be met as the employee develops his work habits and practices.
- b. Of even greater importance, perhaps, is the fact that overrating some individuals is unfair to those doing as good or better. There is a limit to the upper ranges of a rating scale and, to the extent individuals are overrated, the upper end of the scale becomes less meaningful in those cases where the rating is actually justified.

8. THE ROLE OF THE REVIEWING OFFICIAL

The reviewing official has the responsibility of deciding for himself whether the supervisor is either underrating or overrating the employee concerned. Reviewing officials should recognize that their frame of reference concerning an employee with whom they may have contact only occasionally is different from that of the supervisor who normally is in constant association with the individual. At the same time, the reviewing official should take this opportunity to evaluate the ability of the supervisor to rate subordinates. Reviewing officials are specifically asked *not* to require supervisors to rewrite Fitness Reports with which, the reviewing official does not agree. Instead, the proper procedure for the reviewing official is to add to the report, in the space provided, his comments on the rating given by the supervisor. The evaluation provided by the supervisor should be his own opinion. It is stressed that some disagreement between rater and reviewer is not unusual.

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